

percent of new academic positions were in the private sector. Formerly concentrated in the public sector, nearly 30 percent of the national enrollment in higher education in Mexico today is within the private sector.

Meanwhile, the process of decentralizing in higher education from the capital to the states has continued. There is a growing tendency for enrollments to be concentrated in a few fields (law, accounting, and business administration have more than a third of the students), and participation by women has reached 50 percent nationwide. Multiple evaluation mechanisms have been established in public institutions and strong efforts made to increase the quality of work conditions for full-time academics.

#### *Looking Ahead Toward 2006*

Experts calculate that over the next six years national enrollments will grow by 1,000,000 students, the result of an increment in the 18-to-24-year age cohort and the improvement in the quality of secondary education. In order to serve the student numbers, we will need 55,000 new professors. Where will these new students find places to study? Will it be mostly the public sector that takes them in and, if so, will it be in the traditional modalities—public four-year universities—or in short two-year courses in new institutions such as technological universities?

#### *The Transition*

The public, keen on knowing the programs of the new government and the people who will be in charge, must wait five months until the president assumes his post (the first day of December). Fox formed a transition team for science and technology and another one for education. It is notable that this last one is coordinated by the dean of the Instituto tecnológico y de estudios superiores de Monterrey (ITESM—Technological and Higher Studies Institute of Monterrey), one of the most prestigious private institutions in Mexico. The members of the team have experience in different areas. One of the members, for example, is the general secretary of the Asociación Nacional de universidades e instituciones de educación superior (ANUIES—National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education), an organization that includes and represents the deans of all public institutions.

People in the traditional higher education elite have strongly criticized the views of the people close to Fox. This opposition has been well covered by the press in the last few weeks. Is this an expression of their defense of the values of public higher education or is it only a defense of their long-held positions of power? It is very likely that both motivations are at work.

#### *Central Issues*

Though the specific proposals of the transition team on higher education have not been made public, two issues seem priorities on the next government's agenda: first, the organization of a National Scholarships and Educational Credit Program, to aid students and decrease dropouts for eco-

nomics reasons; and, second, the growing use of virtual strategies in order to widen access to higher education.

These two policies have generated criticism from the public sector: Dr. de la Fuente, dean of the UNAM said: "the university must not depend on the market . . . and we, the UNAM, are not a *virtual* university." On the other hand, the left, which believes in the right to free higher education—now the case only at the UNAM, since all other public institutions charge fees, and most of these fees are more than merely symbolic—sees great risks in the idea of scholarships or systems of educational credit.

As of November 2000, in the absence of any official announcements from Fox, intellectuals and public opinion are still trying to speculate on the future of higher education and the risks and problems that may ensue.

#### *Unavoidable Realities*

Regardless of what Fox and his team may have in mind on the subject of education, it is a fact that the 2001 budget will be austere, as was this year's. Fox has correctly stated that without a tax reform that increases public funds it will not be possible to implement the central programs of his plan. Such a tax reform will be very difficult to achieve in a parliament where Fox lacks a majority.

Demands on higher education will grow at great speed, and Fox's policies will be strongly criticized by the followers of the old regime. It remains to be seen whether Fox and his ministers will be granted sufficient time to set up their plans for scholarships and wider access. ■

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## Higher Education Subsidies in Argentina

### **Martin Gonzalez Rozada and Alicia Menendez**

*Martin Gonzalez Rozada is associate researcher at CEDES, Buenos Aires, Argentina. E-mail: <mgr@cedes.org>. Alicia Menendez is Lecturer in economics and public affairs at Princeton University. E-mail: <menendez@princeton.edu>. Authors' note: This article summarizes "Public Education in Argentina: Subsidizing the Rich?" Serie de Documentos de Economia No. 15, Universidad de Palermo - CEDES, June 2000.*

**T**he Argentine central government heavily subsidizes higher education by financing tuition-free public universities serving all students, regardless of their economic and academic background. Enrollment is open to all individuals with a high school degree. In 1998, almost 83 percent of more than one million undergraduates in the greater Buenos Aires area were attending public universities. During the last decade, this figure has been increasing at an average annual rate of 3.6 percent. A direct consequence of

this “overpopulation” of public institutions is an associated decrease in the quality of education.

The current organization of public higher education presents several other problems. The most obvious is the availability (or lack thereof) of public funds for the growing student numbers—given the severe fiscal constraints in the country. The system has also had unintended distributional consequences. Although standard models of public provision of college education tend to imply a transfer from the rich to the poor, new empirical and theoretical work show that free higher education implies a transfer from lower to higher income groups.

Of course, students attending public universities defend the status quo. They are active, organized, and very vocal. The argument for the tuition-free university is made on grounds of equal opportunity and access to education for all. In Argentina, this is far from being the case; our work shows that only a privileged group is able to attend college. Poorer students are excluded from higher education, so they are not able to enjoy the subsidy. In reality, tuition-free public universities do not seem to benefit the poor.

#### *The Population under Study*

We analyze data from the May 1998 Permanent Household Survey, which covers the greater Buenos Aires region. In Argentina, universities are located throughout the country, but the majority are in the main urban areas, and in 1998, more than 50 percent of university students were concentrated in Buenos Aires. Our analysis focuses on this region. We examine the group that is between 17 and 34 years of age and without a college degree. Approximately 18 percent of them are enrolled in the university. The rest have finished or abandoned their formal schooling.

The most striking difference between those who attend college and those who do not is their family per capita income. The average family income for those who do not attend college is \$269 a month, less than half the \$615 average that of university students. The distribution of education among parents is also very different. Almost half the college students have fathers who attended university, while less than 7 percent of the nonattendees' fathers did. We find a similar pattern among the mothers.

Almost 70 percent of university students belong to the wealthiest 30 percent of the population, while only 11 percent belong to the poorest 50 percent. This was not always the situation. Using comparable data from 1974, we find that the probability of attending college was much higher for those at the bottom half of the income distribution then. Almost 30 percent of the college students in 1974 belonged to the bottom 50 percent of the income distribution.

#### *University Attendance*

By modeling the probability of attending college as a function of a family's socioeconomic background and personal

characteristics, we find socioeconomic background to be an important determinant of college attendance. Individuals coming from families with higher income have a greater probability of attending college, after controlling for sociodemographic characteristics. Also, the probability of attending college is greater for those individuals belonging to a family whose head of household has a high school or college degree. Having attended a private school also increases the chances of attending university. This may reflect differences between public and private institutions and how those differences affect the demand for additional education.

Our results clearly imply that income is an important determinant of college attendance. Its effect on attendance is greater at the top of the income distribution. For example, doubling per capita income from \$50 to \$100 would only increase the chance of attending the university by 14 percent. However, increasing per capita income from \$500 to \$1,000 would raise the probability by 128 percent.

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***Students at public universities seem to have the ability to pay; therefore one might argue that the equity and efficiency of the system could be improved by charging tuition.***

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#### *Public vs. Private University Students*

Students in private universities are similar to those in public institutions in many aspects. The educational level of the students' parents is not statistically different. Among students in private universities, 69 percent attended private secondary schools. This figure is not much lower than that among students in public institutions, almost half of whom come from private high schools. It should be noted that private high schools are not tuition-free, in some cases charging a higher fee than private universities.

As mentioned earlier, very few students (less than 12 percent) belong to the bottom 50 percent of the income distribution. Surprisingly, the figure is somewhat higher among the students in private institutions, almost 14 percent. A multivariate analysis indicates that per capita family income has no effect on the probability of attending a public institution, as opposed to a private, after controlling for sociodemographic variables. Educational level of the head of the household and number of siblings have no effect either. In brief, none of the variables related to personal characteristics, income, and family background appear to affect whether students attend a private or a public university. The only variable that seems to have an effect is prior attendance at a public high school, which raises the probability of attending a

public college. This may reflect differences in taste or differences between public and private schools, such as quality of education, that may affect the demand for higher education.

#### Conclusion

College students in Argentina belong to the country's wealthiest families. Almost 50 percent of the students at public universities belong to the highest 20 percent of the income distribution. Moreover, 90 percent of the students

at public universities have a higher than the median per capita family income, and 46 percent attended private high schools. Since the public university is tuition-free, this is an implicit subsidy of the richest families.

Students at public universities seem to have the ability to pay; therefore one might argue that the equity and efficiency of the system could be improved by charging tuition. To complement this policy, universities should offer selective scholarships and student loans, in order to attract the most talented students from poor families. ■

## A New Journal

*Christian Higher Education: A Journal of Applied Research and Practice* invites religious educators to submit papers for review and possible publication. The journal, a peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary periodical, is published by Taylor & Francis, Publishers. Taylor & Francis is a major international, commercial publisher with offices in the United Kingdom and the United States. The focus of *Christian Higher Education* is not on theology *per se* but on *applied* educational research and innovative experimental and demonstration programs and practices at Christian colleges, universities, seminaries, and institutes around the world. The journal is not affiliated in any way with a particular confession within the Christian religion, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox. Instead, this ecumenical, quarterly-published journal is an independent, high-visibility, premier archival forum for practitioners and researchers within the Christian religion regardless of theological persuasion. The purposes of the journal include the stimulation and cross-fertilization of ideas and the dissemination of information about research and practice taking place within Christian higher education.

The journal is currently soliciting papers from faculty, administrators, and all others associated with Christian higher education. Of particular interest to the journal are papers about program developments being innovated and tested by those engaged in the study and modern practice of Christian higher education. Essays should explore educational problems and discuss issues in depth. Papers are invited regarding innovative educational leadership practices and teaching and learning programs at the cutting edge of progress. These papers should provide fresh insights into creative ways and means of improving Christian higher education. Research papers published must be clearly rooted in solid analytical methodologies, whether qualitative or quantitative. All materials published in the journal represent original contributions to the growing literature in the burgeoning field of Christian higher education.

For further details, contact the editor, Dr. D. Barry Lumsden, University of North Texas, Higher Education Program, P.O. Box 311337, Denton, Texas 76203-1337. Fax: 940-369-7177.

## New Book Series Announced

Two new book series have been established. These series will highlight key research and analysis in the field of higher education. Both have an international focus.

- The Greenwood Studies in Higher Education is a new series published by Greenwood Publishers. It will feature books on all aspects of higher education. The series is edited by Philip G. Altbach. Proposals can be sent to Dr. Altbach or directly to Greenwood Publishers. Ms. Jane Garry is the sponsoring editor at Greenwood. Her e-mail address is: <jgarry@greenwood.com>.
- The RoutledgeFalmer Dissertation Series in Higher Education—this book series publishes the best research-based doctoral dissertations. The series provides a source for the best research on higher education in a timely way. It is multidisciplinary and publishes dissertations using all methodologies. Authors are expected to revise their work modestly for publication. Books will be published in hardback editions. The first four titles in the series will be published in early 2001. Publication typically takes from seven to nine months, and a standard royalty is offered to all authors. Proposals for books in the series are welcome. Please contact either Dr. Philip G. Altbach or Dr. Farideh Koohi-Kamali, Dissertations Editor, RoutledgeFalmer, 29 W. 35<sup>th</sup> St., New York, NY 10001, USA. E-mail: fkamali@routledge-ny.com.